



Election 2012 Election 2012

Over the next few weeks the Catholic Bishops of Illinois will be distributing four bulletin inserts to provide guidance and reflection points for Catholics exercising their right to vote in the upcoming 2012 election.

This is the first of the four inserts and provides an introduction to the three inserts to follow in the coming weeks. These inserts are based on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) publication, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (www.faithfulcitizenship.org). Additional information about specific policy issues addressed by your elected officials can be found on the Catholic Conference of Illinois (CCI) website at www.ilcatholic.org. The CCI website will also have all the inserts posted as they are released.

1. **For the weeks of September 30 and October 7 we will write one insert about Conscience: What is conscience and what is its function?** A conscience formed by our Catholic faith is needed to bring our moral principles to the debate about issues and candidates. However, we feel compelled to clarify the definition of a conscience because some cite their conscience as a justification for immoral public policy positions or support for a candidate whose positions conflict with the common good. Conscience is more than a “feeling.” Where there is moral clarity, conscience cannot be used to justify a contradictory public policy stance.
2. **For the weeks of October 14 and 21 we will write one insert about the importance of evaluating a candidate’s position on public policy issues.** The moral imperative to respond to the basic needs of our neighbors – such as food, shelter, health care, education, and meaningful work – is universally binding on our conscience, but may be legitimately fulfilled through a variety of means. Catholics should seek the best methods to respond to these needs. However, candidates who promise ways to address these important needs, yet at the same time gloss over their support for “intrinsically evil” actions such as abortion, will not receive the support of a person with a conscience well-formed by the Catholic faith or human reason.
3. **Finally, on October 28 and November 4 we will conclude our series of statements with one insert that addresses our profound concern for religious liberty.** If the current definition of “religious employer” proposed by the federal Department of Health and Human Services is allowed to stand, it could spread throughout federal and state law, diminish Catholic ministries throughout the nation, and most importantly, weaken a foundational respect for religious freedom and diversity that has stood since 1776.

The laity is a powerful voice in our nation and state. Our role as bishops is to call your attention to the trends and the issues that we believe are impacting the moral dimension of our society. We hope you will find this series of bulletin inserts educational and will reflect on their content. We also hope they will be helpful to you in discerning not only how to vote, but also in encouraging you to become further involved in promoting the common good in our state.